

**Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

PG 68-4-8
Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Riverdale Bookstore

2. Location

street & number 4701 Queensbury Ave. ☐ not for publication

city, town Riverdale ☐ vicinity of congressional district #5

state Maryland county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name John C. Dorsey Plumbing & Heating Co., Inc.

street & number 6100 R.I. Ave. telephone no.:

city, town Riverdale state and zip code MD

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. P.G. County Courthouse liber

street & number 14735 Main St. folio

city, town Upper Marlboro state MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title none

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No.

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Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved

date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The building that is presently occupied by the Riverdale Bookstore is a one-story yellow brick building which stands on the railroad bed of the B & O line (Washington branch), immediately to the west and slightly off-parallel to the tracks. It is rectangular, roughly 40' x 20', with a hip roof varied by a 1/2 height projecting gable in the centre of the north slope.

The building has no determinable principal facade; the main entrance is a doorway cut at 45 degrees angle into the NW corner of the building. The north facade, facing the relatively busy Queensbury Ave. crossing of the B & O tracks, consists of two projecting square bays which reach almost the full story, and which flank a central door. One of the bays is boarded up and the door is not in use. (Access via this door is limited by the arrangement of book cases within the store.)

The east facade, facing the RR tracks, is composed of five windows, similarly boarded up. Variation in the brickwork indicates that a central overhead door, or perhaps yet another bay window, has been removed.

The west facade, fronting along R.I. Ave., is composed of a bay window projection on the northern corner, matching that of the northern facade; another door; and two windows.

The building is attached at its south end to another building, 6105 R.I. Ave.

The shingled roof is interrupted by a high stove chimney piece on the eastern slope, a smaller chimney piece on the western slope, and what looks like a vent on the crest of the hip roof.

The building occupies most of the lot between the tracks and Queensbury Ave; parking spaces lie on the western side, reaching from the street to the building. A cement walk runs along the non-used north side of the building, and grass runs from the west side down to the tracks.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	Builder/Architect
check: Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D	
and/or	
Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local	

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The building presently occupied by the Riverdale Bookstore must have been a significant landmark in the community of Riverdale. Along with the B & O RR Station located directly across Queensbury Ave. (until it was "retired in place" and demolished sometime after January, 1955), it framed the busy Queensbury Crossing. Until the East-West Highway overpass was built in 1968, 100 yards to the north of the crossing, it was the busiest point of access across the tracks in the town of Riverdale.

The land on which the building was constructed was part of the "Riverdale" estate of the Calvert family. The B & O line was laid through the property in the mid-19th century, but what became the town of Riverdale was not platted until 1889, two years after 475 acres of the estate were bought by the Riverdale Park Co., with the intention of developing a commuter suburb for Washington.

The actual development of the Suburb of Riverdale was initiated in 1890/91, with the construction of the B & O RR Station.² The fact that the Riverdale Park Co. paid for the station's construction (upon terms that made it incumbent upon the B & O to "buy it back" only after 75 residences were built, which it did in 1905),³ argues strongly for the likelihood that the Queensbury- (then Madison) Ave. crossing was envisioned by the Riverdale Park Co. itself as the centre of town. This is further borne out by the fact that Riverdale's other major landmark in its first 50 years was the Riverdale Presbyterian Church, built on a lot only a block away from the Crossing, on land also specially donated by the Riverdale Park Co. (It is less clear, however, whether the Company actually chose the lot it donated to the congregation.) In 1899, streetcar service was laid along (present day) R.I. Ave., which reinforced the vitality of the train line and, indirectly, the centrality of the RR crossing to the life of the community. The building at 4701 Queensbury would have been a major element of the commercial activity these developments promoted, and reflected.

The building was built some time between 1904 and 1924, when it first appears on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of that year. It has served, among other things, as a costume store, a laundromat, and a hardware outlet for the Riverdale Fuel & Coal Co. Its most recent incarnation as a commercial establishment is as the Riverdale Bookshop. In this role, it continues as a sort of community centre.

Item 8 (continued):

Although the look of the original building has been altered by the construction of the adjoining building, it would seem that the original elements of the building itself have been modified little beyond the placement of features within the exterior walls (windows, doors) in response to the demands of its varied past commercial uses. Because it exists in roughly its original form, and represents the albeit limited commercial tradition of Riverdale's first town "center," at the B & O crossing, 4701 Queensbury contributes to both the fabric and image of Riverdale as an early 20th century commuter suburb.

Notes:

1. Harwood, Hubert H., The Impossible Challenge, The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Maryland, (Baltimore: Barnard, Roberts & Co., 1979), p. 241.
2. Ibid., p. 353.

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